SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 303. FOR WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 20, 1894. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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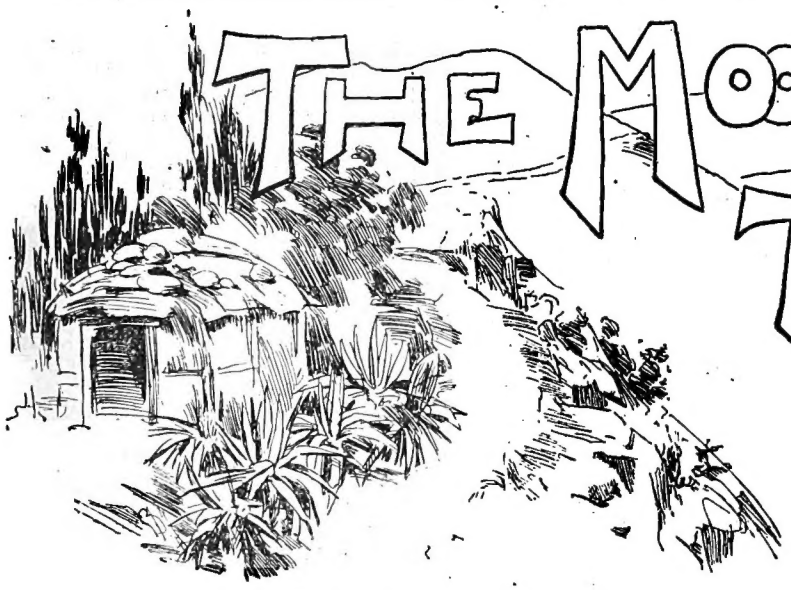

THE MOORISH TREASURE

FAR up the rocky slopes of the Montes de Toledo, off from the narrow donkey-path which zigzagged its tempestuous way up the mountain-side, stood a solitary hut. It was a rudely-constructed, one-roomed affair, with a roof of dirt and stones.

To render its isolation more complete, a hedge of aloes had been grown on the side nearest the trail. On the other side lay a small piece of tilled ground, and in a shallow furrow stood a plough, like the primitive one of Adam of old—the crutch of a tree. It was rudely shod, however, with iron. A small *burro* browsed beneath a clump of cypress trees in the rear.

Within the bowl-like room of the hut, upon a rude mattress, lay an aged peasant. His hollow cheeks and emaciated form told a story of sickness and suffering, and the white, pathetic face and lustreless eyes showed it was a sickness unto death. Manuel Mendez realised his end was near, and, like many another sin-burdened mortal has done, was easing his final hours by a confession of his deeds and misdeeds to a fellow-man. It was, however, more than the mere relief that comes from imparting burdensome secrets which he sought when he told the young man, who sat upon a low-backed stool beside his bed, the story of his life. Gratitude to his youthful benefactor filled the old man's heart.

An itinerant musician, whose entire worldly possessions consisted of a guitar—which he loved better than his soul—and the clothes upon his back, Juan Tejera had in his wanderings come upon the peasant while lying ill, and out of goodness of heart had remained with and taken care of him. It was to repay this labour of compassion that Manuel taxed the strength of his last moments.

"Brother of my soul," he said tenderly, "thou hast been kind to me when I had almost forgotten that man knew of kindness, so long had it been unseen by me; and befriended me when I was deserted by all others; and in recompense, thou shalt know of a treasure greater than thou hast ever dreamed of. It will make thee richer than all men. And the wealth shall be justly thine, for its owners are long since dead, and dead men have no use for gold."

He paused a moment to collect his waning strength; the young man was bending forward eagerly. Down in the valleys below them the silent forces of darkness were gathering and slowly creeping up the mountain side. As if he felt the silent forces of death were also gathering, and was fearful lest they should overtake him with his narrative unfinished, the old man hastened on with it.

"In my younger days I was noted for my skill as a stone worker, and it once happened I was brought, with a fellow-workman, to the suburb of Albaycin, to repair the fountain in the patio of the palace of the gipsy king. The trouble, we found, was at the bottom of the basin. The water was drawn off, and we had descended to make the necessary repairs. While thus engaged I discovered and called the attention of my companion to a hole at the top of the basin. It was large enough to easily admit a man, and we saw that the overhanging, fancifully carved, marble rim of the basin alike protected it from the observation of any one in the patio above, and from the water in the basin below.

"The palace had been built centuries before by the Moors, and we judged we had discovered the entrance to one of those subterranean passages which are so frequently found beneath their houses. Curious to know more about it, we procured candles and started to investigate. We found, as we had expected, a steep tunnel-like passage, down whose slippery stone floor, greased with the dampness and mould of ages, we slid with an alarming rapidity to a somewhat larger, but level, passage. Once down, the question of how to return immediately presented itself. The descent had been remarkable easy, but to slide up was another matter. Finding we were unable to arrive at any solution of the problem, we concluded to investigate further, in the hope of discovering another outlet. We proceeded along the passage cautiously, stooping low to avoid striking our heads against the rocky roof, and holding our candles before us.

"We walked thus a hundred yards, perhaps, when suddenly we came into a sort of vault, and there—ah, how plainly I can see it yet!—Dios! what a sight it was to men who knew well the pinchings of poverty. Gold! gold! gold! There, in one glittering heap, was more than we could earn in a thousand years of toil. We capered like children about the vault, hugged each other with frenzied joy, and crazily talked plans for spending our wealth.

"Then came a change. A greed possessed me. Why should I share these riches with another? I asked myself. What right had Richardo Gonzalez to the gold which I had discovered? Mine it was, and mine it should be. Like all Spaniards, I carried a knife in the folds of my woollen sash;

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"I struck him—first."

already I saw a stiletto in Richardo's hand, but too late! I struck him—first."

The speaker had half risen upon his elbow in the excitement of his recollections, but now stopped and fell back. A moment later, when Juan touched his brow, it was already cold. Death had come with the darkness, which now mantled the mountain tops, and lowered the curtain upon an ended life.

Juan rose and passed out of the hut. He was greatly agitated by the strange story he had just listened to. Wild hopes were created by it, and a life of new expectations and new objects was opened before him. He, the strolling beggar, who most of the time was in doubt as to the source of his next meal, having expectations of wealth! How unreal t seemed.

Yet he could already see himself bearing the gold upon his shoulders from the vault; setting up a princely establishment at Madrid—yes, at Madrid it should be, that home of the luxury-loving—and Carlota. Carlota! He repeated the name with ecstasy. Even now he could see the oval face, the soft lustrous eyes, the round, white neck. Was there ever another so fair? An hour since he had scarcely dared to breathe her name, so far had she seemed above him; but now he even dared hope to win the proud señora, with all her beauty and position. With wealth all things were possible.

In the midst of these rapturous dreamings came the alarming thought that perhaps there were important details of the untimely-ended story yet untold. Manuel may have removed it to another hiding-place, or others, perhaps, had found and appropriated it. But the old careless spirit which had often before comforted him under adverse circumstances again asserted itself, and forbade him meeting trouble half-way.

He was still, however, unable to entirely dismiss his fears, for when he lay down under the stars—he could not bring himself to share the hut with its silent occupant—he dreamed he sought the treasure, but found in its place the bewitching and mocking face of Carlota, who continually eluded him as he pursued her, until old Manuel, in a suit of gold coin, laid on like fish scales, came and bore her further and further from him.

In the morning Juan dug a grave beneath the cypress trees and buried Manuel. Above the little mound of upturned earth he erected a rude wooden cross, and piled stones about its base to secure it. This last service done, he invested himself with the authority of an administrator, assumed the rights of a sole legatee, and began at once to settle up the estate in a simple and satisfactory manner. From an arbour, which had been used as a sort of open-air store-room, he brought great bunches of fragrant Malaga grapes, melons cased with straw, and vegetables of various kinds, all of which he packed in the enormous pockets of the donkey's pannier, until the little brown *burro* was almost hidden from sight beneath the load. In his own pannier—the alforja, or peasant's bag, which he wore slung over his shoulder—he placed those articles so indispensable to the travelling Spaniard, even though his journey be but of an hour's duration—the garlic-pot and wine-skin. Thus equipped he abandoned the little farm, and set off down the mountain to the distant town of Toledo.

Where the donkey-path joined the main highway he came up with a farmer, who, in his great hooded, two-wheeled cart—which looked from a distance, as it went nodding along behind its tandem team of *burros*, like a monstrous old woman's bonnet—was also bound for the market, and they travelled in company the remainder of the journey. Together they crossed the long bridge leading into the city, and jointly argued with the burly revenue official at the towered gate—a dog of a man, who tumbled out every cabbage and carrot in his search for smuggled goods in spite of their pious and tearful protestations of innocence.

At the market place Juan laid his long woollen cloak upon the ground, rolling a rim, and upon this huge plate exposed his fruits and vegetables for sale. Late in the afternoon the red flannel lining of the cloak was cleared, and upon its owner's back again, while the equivalent of its former load jingled musically in his pocket. He was now ready for his journey in search of the hidden treasure.

He had learned much regarding his route and destination during the day, from a *caballero* of the noble profession of beggary, who, motionless as a statue, had been standing near him, with his hand extended in supplication to the passers-by. Prominently displayed upon the beggar's ragged cloak, along with the brass license badge of the government, hung a crest which proclaimed him to be the proud descendant of an old grandee family.

Despite his illustrious lineage and his absurd airs of superiority on that account, he proved himself a sociable and obliging fellow, especially after having been made approachable through the medium of the wine-skin, from which he drank by dexterously shooting a stream into his mouth while holding the skin at full arm's length.

Juan eagerly devoured all the beggar told him; it was all grist to his mill, and even though some of the information did confuse him and add new difficulties to those he already saw, it did not discourage him. His project was one for which he could form no plans, but must feel his way darkly, step by step. He could only observe and learn, and be freely and constantly dependent upon the inspiration of the next moment. His determination, however, inspired a confidence in himself. He had learned, among other things, that the Gipsy King was considered the best guitar-player in Spain. This was important, for, if Juan could do one thing well, it was play upon the guitar.

A long hillside, literally honeycombed with the caves of Gitanos, and dotted here and there with the dilapidated remains of an old Moorish house; irregular, tortuous streets, filled to overflowing with an ever-shifting mass of humanity; the weirdest and most filthy beggars, the loudest and most importunate tradesmen, the laziest and most dilatory workmen, manufacturing rude plates and articles of iron and leather, the ugliest and dirtiest brown women sewing and weaving cloth, all carrying on their occupations in the streets, and children, dogs, and squalor everywhere; such Juan found the Gipsy quarter and its people to be. The whole place, with its teeming population and its underground homes, reminded him of a vast colony of gigantic ants, although he thought they might emulate the industrious habits of that insect with profit to themselves. However, that was their affair, and his present business was not with the common people, but with their king.

For a week he had been in this miserable place, living among the people, keeping his eyes and ears open, and seeking an opportunity to get within the king's palace. He had thought of many plans for effecting this, but rejected them all, upon consideration, as impracticable. He even thought seriously at one time of tunnelling under the walls, and

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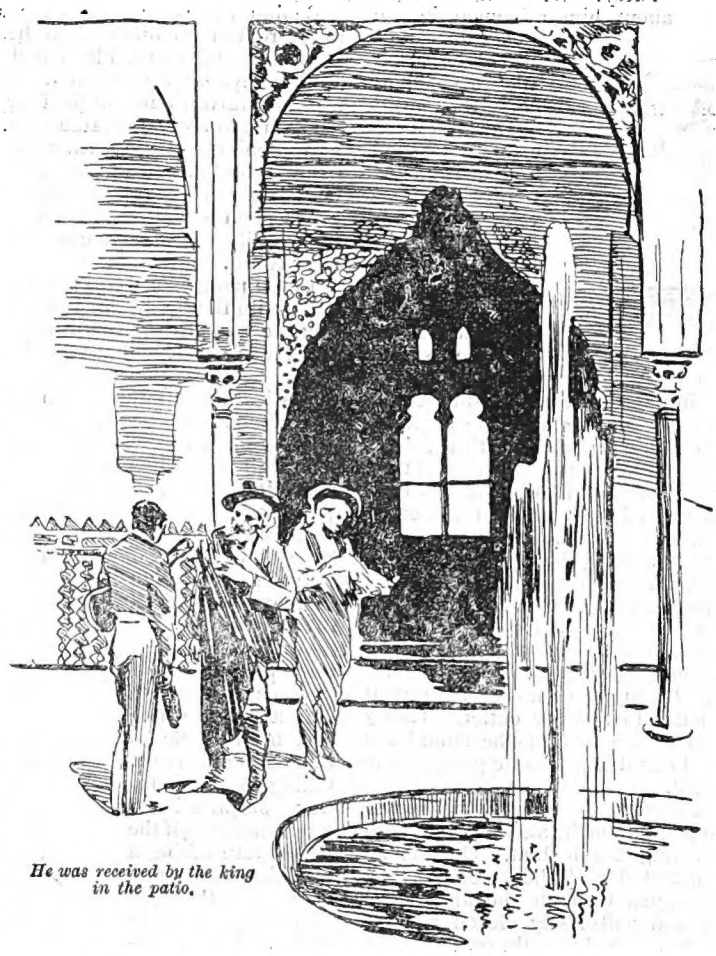
explored the ground about the palace with that object, but was unable to find a spot sufficiently secluded for his operations.

His chief amusement during this time had been playing the guitar. Your true Spaniard is always powerless to resist the attractions of his favourite instrument and will, at any and all times, postpone a journey, put off a duty or stop work—especially stop work—at the first twang of the strings. The children seem born with a knowledge and love for the national *fandango* dance, so early do they acquire it. Juan's fame as a guitarist had soon spread among the gipsies, and wherever he went he was quickly surrounded by a crowd of brown loafers who, with handclappings and exclamations, encouraged the younger ones as they danced the exciting *fandango*. His fame had even penetrated to royal ears, and it was in answer to a summons from the palace that he was now on his way thither.

The imperial residence had at one time been a stately structure, rich with ornamentation and architectural beauty and a pride to its Moorish builders; but time and man had, through successive years, despoiled its beauty, until it now appeared, upon the outside, little more than a group of graceful columns and a reddish stone wall supporting a roof of earth, stones and rubbish. Inside the small spike-studded door, however, more traces of the old-time beauty appeared. Floors inlaid with red and blue tiles, arranged in pleasing mosaics; walls adorned with graceful and ingenious arabesques; doorways with the superb horse-shoe arch above them and with borders of stone coloured differently from the walls and inscribed in letters of azure, crimson and gold with the religious precepts of the Arabs. But even in the most beautiful parts Juan found dirt and squalor to prevail, and fowls roosted on the handsomely carved ornamentations.



He was received by the king in the patio.

He was received by the king in the patio. It may be easily imagined that he regarded with much interest the fountain which played in the centre with a soft murmur, serenely unconscious of the secret which it guarded beneath its rippling waters. Unversed in kings, he had expected a certain amount of ceremony would be connected with his reception, but he was unprepared for the democratic freedom which characterised the court of this gipsy ruler, if the three or four out-at-elbow hangers-on who loafed about the patio could be called by so dignified a name. Their time seemed taken up with their cigarettes, wine-skins, and garlic pots, to the exclusion of any mere matters of state.

When Juan presented himself, the king said simply: "I have heard from many sources that thou canst play upon the guitar with excellence. I have sent for thee; for if thou art as skilful in thy performance as I have heard of thee, thou canst be of service to me. Let me hear thee play."

Presently, as Juan played, there came through a doorway at the end of the patio the five daughters of the king in gaily coloured dresses, with castanets and tambourines, pirouetting and dancing. There was an incessant clapping of hands, and clatter of castanets and rattling of tambourines and stamping of heels upon the tiled floor, accompanied by a low, mournful wail and an agonised twisting and swaying of their bodies as they danced their wild, weird dance.

Among the dancers was one tall, dark woman—Benita, he afterwards learned her name to be—who often swept close to him, flashing a daring look from her black eyes over her shoulder as she passed. To this language of the eye he was not slow to respond in kind. To himself he excused this little faithlessness to Carlota on the ground that it was but a means unto an end—an end with Carlota—and meant nothing. He was of necessity bound to accept every opportunity that offered itself to ingratiate himself in the royal household, he reasoned, for to strengthen himself here was to strengthen his chance of obtaining the treasure, and to obtain that was to obtain Carlota. Looking at it in this light he felt quite virtuous. The dancers filed out, Benita venturing a last look as she disappeared, and he ceased playing.

"Caramba!" exclaimed the king, "my people have spoken truly; thou dost play well indeed. To-morrow my daughters dance in Granada for the pleasure of a party of English travellers, and thou shalt again play for them."

Juan had to be careful lest he betrayed too great an eagerness in expressing his pleasure at such an arrangement. The first, and what he thought to be the hardest, step was now accomplished. He was installed upon a certain footing at the entrance to the hiding-place of the Moorish treasure, and he was not the man he thought himself to be if he did not soon possess it. That night he remained within the palace walls.

He determined to make his first attempt that very night. He could see nothing to be gained by waiting—indeed, the night seemed specially favourable for his project. A thunderstorm was noisily rolling and rumbling up in the mountains, and a strong wind was rising. This would aid him by drowning any accidental noise, and his impatience made him think lightly of ordinary risks. Once with the gold actually in his possession, he would snap his fingers at this patronising king of a race of beggars, build a palace that would put his dilapidated old pile to disgrace, and kick any itinerary musician out of doors who presumed to call him brother.

As soon as the quietness about the palace assured him that its inmates had all retired, he stole out into the patio. He had long ago provided himself with candles and matches and a coil of light rope, with a hook fastened in one end, in anticipation of this occasion. He shut the water off from the foundation and watched it sink in the basin until the marble bottom was exposed, then, leaping down, eagerly felt in the darkness under the rim for the opening. It was an anxious moment. Ah! it was there.

Profiting by the experience of the first explorers, he fastened his hook over the end of the hole, boldly climbed in, uncoiled his rope, and, hand over hand, let himself down the steep

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A woman was running along the balcony towards him.

incline. The place smelled damp and disagreeable. The darkness was so intense that he could almost feel it. At the bottom he lighted his candle, and carefully groped his way along the rocky gallery which he found. His heart beat now with hope and expectation, for every moment he expected to come upon the vault. But he was not to win the legacy of the ancient Moslems thus easily. He walked for what seemed to him a long way without coming to the end of the gallery. The damp rocks about him glistened in the flickering light of his candle, and an occasional bat, frightened by this unwonted visitor, startled him as it darted from some crevice.

Suddenly he heard a quick, angry hissing. At the same moment he saw a large snake coiled upon the stones before him. Under ordinary circumstances Juan was not lacking in physical courage—in fact, he prided himself upon his fearlessness; but when he counted, rising in rapid succession about him, one, two, three, four, five hissing and venomous heads, fear drove all thoughts of further search for the treasure from his mind, and his only concern was for his safety. Already he saw one of the reptiles writhing toward him. He turned and ran. A stone tripped and threw him violently, extinguishing his candle. Now utterly panic-stricken with terror, he arose and dashed forward in the darkness, nor did he slacken his speed until he reached the end of the gallery. There he felt about for his rope. To his surprise he could not find it, but, in its place, a ladder, which felt like iron, and seemed to mount a perpendicular shaft. He concluded that, in his flight, he must have turned into a side passage which led into another outlet. Going back was not to be considered for an instant—he shuddered when he thought of what was behind him—so he grasped the rusty rounds and started upward.

When he had climbed some distance he felt one of the rounds yield slightly as he stepped upon it, and a draught of cold, damp air revealed an opening beside him. Outside he heard the noise of the storm, mingled with the voices of men talking excitedly. As he stepped through the aperture a stone moved up behind him and noiselessly closed it. He found himself upon a gallery overlooking the patio. The storm was now raging violently and the rain falling fast.

To his alarm he saw that many of the household were moving about the patio with lights. He wondered, anxiously, if they had discovered the empty fountain, and if they were searching for him. A woman was running along the balcony towards him. By the light of the hissing and spluttering torches below he saw it was Benita, and he caught her as she came up.

"What has happened?" he asked, at a venture.

She clung to him affrightedly, and looked pale and scared.

"I do not know, I heard an awful crash," she said. Her answer was reassuring to Juan; at least, he was not the cause of the trouble.

At one end of the balcony one of the curtains—which ran on wires from one side of the palace to the other and served as a roof to screen the patio when the sunshine became too fierce—was not fully drawn, and offered a protection from the storm. He drew her beneath this shelter. There they learned, from the conversation of the men below, the crash had been caused by the falling of an already dilapidated outside wall, which the wind had blown down.

The alarm ended, Juan drew his companion further into the shadow and tried to quiet her fears, for she still trembled with excitement.

The household had again settled down into quietness, and the storm abated before he crossed the patio on the way to his room, and turned the water again into the fountain. Above him, standing in a doorway, her tall, graceful figure in silhouette against the light of the room behind her, he could see Benita waving a kiss into the darkness to him.

His hopes had receded far in the past two hours, but he had at least strengthened his position, for he knew that Benita loved him.

. . . . . .

Behind the palace, upon the hillside, a dismantled watch-tower reared its dilapidated head, a mute reminder of the scenes of strife and bloodshed which the surrounding hills and valleys had witnessed. There, centuries before, the Moslem warrior had watched for his Christian enemy.

Upon a low stone, seated at the entrance of the tower, Juan and Benita sat one afternoon, about a week after his unsuccessful attempt to find the secreted gold. Below them lay the swarming gipsy town, and, further down, the beautiful green plain of Vega, dotted here and there with little white houses, like pearls set in emerald, and bounded by the gleaming river Xenil.

In the past week Juan had made much progress in his love affair with Benita, but little towards the object of his travels; in fact, he was further from it now than he had been at any time since his arrival. That very day he had been turned from the palace by the king, who had discovered the love of his daughter. A musical adventurer was all very well in his sphere, but, in the opinion of the gipsy ruler, his sphere was not that of his daughter's suitor. The daughter, however, thought differently, and, while the father in his palace below indulged in his afternoon siesta, she and her lover planned an elopement. Not that Juan had given up hope of finding the treasure, and was going to leave it. His one object was still to possess it. But he knew his only hope of regaining an entrance to the palace was as Benita's husband; therefore he desired to marry her.

As they talked, he idly picked up a stone, and tossed it into a cavity which had been disclosed by a part of the tower falling away. He was surprised to hear sounds as if the stone were falling a considerable distance. Benita noticed it, and said: "There is a tradition that this tower is connected with the palace by an underground passage, but no one has ever been able to discover it."

This was enough to excite Juan, and in a moment he had entered the cavity, and, candle in hand, was descending the steep passage which he found, closely followed by the

The senorita had come out upon the balcony.

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astonished Benita. Unlike the other gallery he had been into, this one was perfectly dry, and soon became high enough to allow them to walk but slightly stooped. They went down, down, until they felt sure they must be under the palace. Suddenly Benita clutched his arm. In the dust beneath them were footprints, and then, a few feet further on, they came upon the white bones of a skeleton. The sight filled Juan with a wild delight. "I have found it! I have found it!" he cried, hurrying forward, dragging his companion after him, at the imminent risk of breaking both their heads.

In a moment the passage widened into a circular room. There, as the dying peasant had told, lay the golden treasure of the Moors. Benita sank upon her knees and piously crossed herself. Juan touched it: first, as if it were something to be feared, then ecstatically gloated over it, running his hands through the pile of shining, jingling pieces, fondling them and murmuring, "Mine! mine at last!"

Taking Benita's shawl from her shoulders, they piled the gold upon it and gathered the four corners together. It made a load so heavy he could scarcely carry it alone. Between them they carried it up to the watch-tower. There, he said to her softly, "At midnight, my beloved, meet me here, and to-morrow we shall be one in name and soul."

He waited until darkness began to gather, and then, as the stars were taking their places one by one in the clear sky above him, he fled—alone.

. . . . . .

A cavalier was serenading his señorita beneath her cross-barred and balconied window. The music was Juan's, but the player was hardly recognisable in the broad-brimmed silky beaver, the fine broadcloth cloak with its crimson velvet lining, and the slashed trousers which he wore.

The señorita had come out upon the balcony to answer his song with one of her own as sweet as his. At last his dream was realised. The low music filled him with rapture, for it was Carlota's song he heard.

Suddenly a tall dark figure confronted him—a knife-blade gleamed an instant in the moonlight.

"Holy Virgin! Benita! Have mercy!" But once—twice the long blade is quickly buried in his breast, and the swooning señorita above sees only the ghastly face of her cavalier fixed in death.

A TURKISH HYPNOTIST

"You are all alike, you English; really you believe that all sciences, all curious discoveries emanate from your brains, when often you only bring to light what was once known. You spoke of the remarkable progress which occult science has made in England the past few years. Well, if you would like, I will tell you an absolutely authentic story, which will prove to you that one hundred years ago hypnotism was not only known in Turkey, but even practised advantageously."

I accepted, and my friend Hamed Pasha began:

"No one has ever seen a similar epistle to that which the Pasha of Kars sent, one hundred years ago, to His Highness the Sultan Selim, third of that name. It was not written upon vellum nor upon parchment; it did not bear a wax-signet, nor any seal whatever, but when the gracious Padishah received it he fell backward upon the thick carpet formed of the skins of Nubian lions.

"This strange missive was composed of eight signs, which, taken together, formed two words of terrible signification, causing the Sultan frightful anger upon reading it. These two words were given out in the morning, at sunrise, by the Pasha of Kars, and at evening, when the last rays of the setting sun gilded the high minarets and the golden domes of the Mosques at Stamboul, like so many gigantic scarabees, the glorious Selim received the fearful message in his palace of Yidiz-Kiosk. How could these eight letters cross in a day the distance which separates Kars in Armenia from the Bosphorus? How could the missive of the Pasha in a few hours reach his august majesty, when the best cavalier, mounted upon the most rapid horse, could not accomplish the distance in less than eight days?

"It happened that my ingenious ancestor, before the invention of the telegraph, contrived means of rapid communication. In the afternoon, by order of the Pasha, the sentinel who stood steadfast upon the highest battlement of the fort took in both hands his long black mantle and waved it once in the air. The soldiers on duty upon the rock of Muzurdagh made the same movement with their mantles, and from point to point, summit to summit, the entire length of the chain of Akdagh, as well as in the plain of Kyzyl, Irmach, and Scutari, one series of black mantles waved once in the air. The scribe of the Sultan, who stood attentively upon the highest tower of the palace watching the horizon, upon seeing this sign wrote, with the end of a pointed reed which served for a pen, a B upon the open parchment before him.

"The sentinel at Kars reversed his mantle, and waved it again, showing the lining of a brilliant red. In less than an hour, from the Caucasus to the Golden Horn, several hundred mantles were waving the red signal. The scribe of the Sultan wrote an A upon the parchment. For an hour the mantles continued to wave from the summits, sometimes red, sometimes black, following the code. At evening, when the muezzins were calling the faithful to prayer, the scribe of Selim wrote upon his parchment the last letter of the winged message from the Pasha of Kars.

"'BARUT JPL' ('Powder given out'), said the Pasha.

"The news was serious; for if the Pasha had no more powder how could he repulse the assault of the Russians? He would have to surrender, and Kars, the key of the Caucasus, would fall into the hands of the soldiers of the great Catherine. The poor secretary of Selim thought of the consequences of the news, and slowly and timidly approached the apartments of his master. The unfortunate scribe had reason to fear, for scarcely had the Sultan glanced at the parchment when, as a messenger of bad news, the scribe received forty blows—five for each letter.

"'Happily,' said the faithful servitor to himself, with that resigned philosophy which forms the Mussulman character, 'the Pasha of Kars confined himself to a telegraphic style, for if he had used the usual formula: "Glory of the Universe, Master of all Sovereigns, of all Power, thy Enchained Slave, striking his humble forehead, the lowest before thy brilliant throne, which touches Heaven," etc., etc., I would be dead.'

"This brutality only slightly appeased the anger of the Sultan, who now summoned his Grand Vizier. He was called Ibrahim, an old and ugly man, but very intelligent. When he entered, bent in executing the many salamaleks prescribed by etiquette, the amiable Padishah, instead of saluting, hit him on the head. This did not forebode an agreeable conversation, so he prostrated himself still lower to escape the storm.

"'Ah, rascal! Miscreant!' roared His Highness, greatly

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exasperated. 'Is this the way you watch over my army? I am no longer astonished that the cursed Muscovites check our brave soldiers if all my generals are in the same predicament as my captain at Kars! Without powder, indeed! But explain how it happens that a fort so important as that of Kars should want ammunition.'

"'Probably it has burned its last cartridge,' humbly suggests the Grand Vizier without daring to rise.

"'You are an imbecile, Ibrahim. I have a mind to throw you in prison at once. If the Pasha has no powder, he probably has no money to buy it; so to-morrow morning, at daybreak, you start out a caravan filled with a thousand purses of silver.'

"'I have the purses, Gracious Majesty, but where shall I get the silver to fill them?'

"'That does not concern me. Apply to my Green banker, unless you prefer to ask the Persian financier, who lent me money the other day.'

"'Your orders shall be obeyed, your Majesty,' replied Ibrahim with humility. 'To-morrow a thousand purses will set out for Kars.'

"Happy to have escaped so easily, the Grand Vizier left the palace and proceeded slowly to the residence of the brave Hassan, from whom he expected to borrow the necessary money. This cunning Persian was a man of precaution, and never allowed a sum of money to leave the bank without at first deducting an honest interest of twenty per cent. Thus, instead of one thousand purses, Hassan counted out only eight hundred; but the Sultan wanted a thousand, so the Grand Vizier signed a note for two thousand and received sixteen hundred.

"Reaching home, the faithful Ibrahim took the superfluous six hundred and hid them under the mattress of the divan, then sent for the Khaznadar Pasha (Treasurer General), to confide the care of sending the silver into Asia Minor.

"Ibrahim was a true Turkish functionary, and the sight of the little purses, methodically arranged on the carpet, made him reflect:

"'You pretty silver things! You are destined to be devoured by the cannon! The noble metal of which you are made will go up in smoke, and shall I do nothing to stop this vandalism? No, Allah would not pardon me if I did not make the attempt. If I cannot save you all, at least it is my duty to protect some of you. Since the Pasha wishes to kill the Russians, he should put in two shells in each cannon, thus using only half as much powder; consequently he does not need but half this sum.'

"Thanks to this subtle reasoning, Ibrahim, finding his conscience at peace, hurried to put away five hundred purses under the mattress with the others.

"What is most astonishing, when the Khaznadar took possession of the remaining five hundred he reflected also:

"'O Allah,' said he, 'if the Pasha was not an imbecile he would know how to spare his ammunition. Instead of sending useless balls and bullets great distances, he ought to let the enemy approach, then massacre them with cartridges. Why should I prevent this brave Pasha from giving proof of his bravery? It is my duty to furnish an occasion for it. Then, here are two hundred and fifty purses for him and the same for me.'

"The Karavanbachi (chief of the caravan) said in turn:

"'Two hundred and fifty purses are too heavy for one camel, and too light for two. I know I ought not to maltreat an animal, the Koran forbids it. My duty is, then, to divide this sum evenly.'

"It was done.

"The janizary who set out with some soldiers to escort the camel loaded with the one hundred and twenty-five purses unceremoniously helped himself to half the load, deeming it useless to trouble his subaltern mind with ingenious reasoning.

"Reaching Kars unimpeded, he placed the sixty-two and one-half purses at the feet of the Pasha.

"'Sixty-two purses and a half,' said the captain to himself. 'That is very little to buy ammunition. What will I do? Ah! I will give it to my secretary, who complained just now of having no more sand to dry his writing. In this way one of us, at least, will have what is wanting.'

"He called his secretary, and said to him: 'The Sultan, our glorious sovereign, is a master who lets nothing escape him. He has learned you needed sand for your writing, and he has sent you sixty-two purses and a half, full of white pieces, with which you can buy sand and fill your office for several years.'

"Eight days later, the Pasha of Kars sent to his majesty the Sultan Selim, a new winged message, laconic and terrible. The mantles of the sentinels were not waved very long from the summits. Three signs sufficed to transmit the fatal news: 'Taken.' Kars was taken.

"The unfortunate Pasha was sent at once to Constantinople and thrown into prison. During the several days which were spent in the dungeon the ex-Governor of Kars had the pleasure of reflecting upon his situation, and of preparing his defence. One morning they brought him before His Highness. The Pasha allowed the reproaches which his master heaped upon him on entering to pass unnoticed, then, when he judged the anger of the terrible Sultan had subsided somewhat, he began to plead his cause boldly and frankly.

"'You say, Light of the Faithful, that you sent me one thousand purses to enable me to buy some powder. Now, if I had received them, I would have been able to check the Russians. Kars would still belong to your Majesty. I swear upon the Koran I received only sixty-two purses and a half. Here is a mystery which at first appears incomprehensible, but upon reflecting a little the explanation is easy. If you will permit your faithful servant to give it, you will speedily see that he is not guilty. You sent one thousand purses, but only sixty-two and a half reached me; it is because the sum has been divided by two four times. In other terms, you have been robbed four times, glorious Padishah. Now, if you desire to know the names of the robbers, nothing would be more easy. They are those through whose hands the money passed:

"'The first is surely the Grand Vizier, who pocketed five hundred purses; the second could only be the Khaznadar, who took two hundred and fifty; the third would be the Karavanbachi, who carried off one hundred and twenty-five; and the fourth must be the janizary of the escort, who kept sixty-two and a half. See, great Seigneur, how simple that is.'

"During all this discourse the Sultan Selim remained quiet, then spoke in a perfectly composed manner:

"'Very well, Ali; you are a good soldier and a loyal servant, who has not yet learned the art of lying. You will re-enter my good graces, and I will return all your grades and privileges. As for this miserable Ibrahim, the first and greatest robber of the four, he will pay dearly for his infamous action. I will teach him what the Sultan Selim does to a Grand Vizier who has the audacity to rob his master. You go, my faithful Ali, and find him this evening, before the hour of prayer, and present to him this noose of red silk. He will understand. Go!'

"For the first time in his life Ali Pasha paled upon hearing this sentence of death pronounced in so tranquil a tone. To strike an enemy in the face with arms when he could defend himself; to struggle with a warrior who was armed as well as he, was for him only pleasure; but to send someone into the other world with a little silk cord revolted him. However, the order of the Sultan was absolute; he must submit. So the brave Ali left the palace, wondering how he should execute the sentence.

"In his sumptuous palace of Ortakoe, whose terraced gardens descended to the sea, the Grand Vizier Ibrahim reposed, leaning against a pile of pillows, fingering his amber beard; before him, in a basin, burned a perfumed mixture, whose fragrance filled the place.

"Suddenly the heavy hanging which concealed the door lifted, and Ali Pasha entered. Upon seeing before him one whom he believed was still in prison Ibrahim felt a sinister presentiment.

"'Let your last hour be happy,' said Ali in a grave voice, standing in the doorway.

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"Ibrahim did not misunderstand the sense of these words; he knew by the salute that Ali could only be a messenger of death, and that he held concealed in the folds of his cafetan the terrible silken noose. Still the face of Ibrahim remained passive; his eyes burned a little bright. Slowly he said: 'Allah wishes it! Allah is powerful! We are at his feet only miserable worms of the dust. Let his will be accomplished. Render me this last service of waiting a moment, and let me finish my ablutions and my prayers. You know Mahomet has proclaimed sacred the vows of the dying.'

"'Your pardon,' replied Ali; 'but my orders are absolute. I cannot lose you from sight a moment. Moreover, what good would it do you to leave the room? Look out of the window! There are more than a thousand janizaries surrounding your palace. Do you not hear the clash of arms? They are the guards of His Majesty who have invaded your palace. You see it is in vain to try to escape.'

"'Of which I never dreamed,' replied Ibrahim. 'Reassure yourself, Ali, I will not keep you waiting long. Please be seated.'

"He struck his hands three times, and two Nubian slaves appeared. They tremblingly brought in an ewer and a basin and a prayer-rug.

"Ibrahim then raised his mantle, and slowly made his ablutions. No one would have thought, seeing him so calm, that in a few minutes the fatal cord would encircle his brown neck. Outside, upon the high minarets of the city, the muezzins intoned their soft and monotonous chant announcing to the faithful the decline of day.

"When the Grand Vizier plunged his head in the basin, Ali, thrusting his hand under his cafetan, drew out the cord of red silk, and placed it in the hand of one of the slaves. The slaves understood.

"Upon delivering this deadly noose, which he would receive again only after its mission was accomplished, the soldier trembled. He had seen thousands of men fall upon the battle-field without flinching, but upon contemplating this full, plump face, which in a few minutes would be only an inert mass, he was horrified. Ah! a terrible business that of an executioner.

"While Ali Pasha was thus sadly reflecting the Grand Vizier finished his ablutions. With slow, measured, and majestic step he advanced toward the prayer-rug, upon which he stood with his head high and proud, his body erect, in order to isolate himself from the rest of the world, so that no terrestial noise should interrupt his ecstatic meditations.

"The Grand Vizier very slowly raised his arms, and placed the palms of his hands over his ears. His large black eyes, burning with a strange fire, rested upon Ali Pasha. The brave captain, nervous and troubled, did not know how to account for this singular attitude. Why did not the doomed man say his prayers like a good Mussulman? Why did those eyes, which gleamed in the dark like the dagger of an assassin, rest upon him?

"The poor Pasha did not seek the key of the mystery very long; little by little, a strange, inexplicable happiness overcame him; it seemed to him that his body and his mind, detached from terrestial things, floated in the pure regions of ether, softly cradled by perfumed zephyrs. Slowly his eyes closed, his head inclined upon his breast, and, leaning against the divan where he had fallen, he slept.

"Ibrahim, finally abandoning his meditative attitude, approached Ali, and raised one of his eyelids—the eye was without expression or life.

"'He sleeps,' cried the Grand Vizier with a triumphant joy. Then, seating himself gravely upon the divan in front of his victim, whom he watched constantly, Ibrahim began the following recital, articulating each word slowly, as if he wished to thoroughly engrave the words upon the mind of his auditor:

"'When I first delivered the fatal news, he made his ablutions, then prayed prostrated as the Koran prescribes. His prayer finished, he seated himself upon a divan, and, taking from the slave the cord, he made a sliding knot, passing it round his neck. He looked at me for the last time, crossed his arms upon his breast and made a sign to the slaves, who seized each an end and drew it with all their might. It was a horrible sight; his face swelled out, reddened, then grew purple; his eyes left their orbits; his tongue hung out of his mouth black and lifeless. The slaves redoubled their efforts; one would have thought the soul hesitated to leave its earthly habitation. Finally, a last jolt, a supreme convulsion, the head fell back, the arms dropped inert; it was over. One of the slaves detached the cord. What a horrible black mark it left in the flesh! They covered the corpse with a mantle. Your justice was satisfied, O Sublime Selim.'

"When Ibrahim had finished his recital, he extended himself on the ground, one of the slaves covered him with his mantle, then approaching Ali Pasha, he struck him twice upon his face.

"The brave Captain opened his eyes and looked round as though he had had a painful dream. The slave, inclining profoundly before him, returned the red noose. This movement completely recalled to his mind the order of the Sultan, and seizing the fatal cord Ali concealed it in his breast. Then, rising he glanced furtively upon the human form stretched under the mantle, and advanced toward the door.

"'Pardon, noble Pasha,' said the slave, 'would you not like to see him?'

"'Never, unfortunate one,' replied Ali, with horror. 'I should never sleep again.' He went out, and signed to the officer to retire with his men.

"'Death has no need of a sentinel,' said he. The chief of the janizaries and Ali mounted horses and set off in the direction of Yidiz-Kiosk.

"'Peace be with him,' said the faithful servant to the gracious Sultan Selim, when reciting the details of the death of the Grand Vizier.

"'You say the agony was very long?' added the Padishah.

"'Terrible, your Majesty,' responded Ali. 'One would have thought he had seven souls nailed to his body.'

"'Glorious Majesty,' added Ali, 'I am your faithful slave; I am ready to suffer death for you. Say the word and I will meet death, without trembling, in the midst of shot and shell, but, I beg you, never send me on a like mission.'

"'Be tranquil, my brave Ali, thy prayer shall be answered. But thou art my faithful servant. Another might have let this cunning rascal escape; he was a great knave, between you and me. The clemency of Allah descend upon him,' added Selim in a funereal tone.

. . . . . .

"At midnight, when the moon concealed his silver disc behind the mountains, a fine 'tartan,' with its dark sails, glided rapidly and silently upon the gentle waves of the Bosphorus. Upon the deck the ex-Grand Vizier Ibrahim, surrounded by his wives and children, was seated.

"'Confess, my sweet Kadite,' said Ibrahim to the eldest of his companions, 'that it would have been too beastly to die for five hundred purses of silver. Once again have I cause to know that I made a good purchase when I bought you at the market at Cairo. It was you that revealed to me the secret of the women of Egypt, this secret, thanks to which one can put to sleep his neighbour. It is not at all difficult, and I am astonished there are so few who know how to practise this precious art.

"'To put that poor Ali to sleep was only child's play. I would like to know what punishment His Highness will inflict upon him when, wishing to proceed with my interment, he will perceive that I have fooled them. Poor Ali! what a pity he is so honest! I could have taken him with me. The Tsarine would have made him a colonel, as she will make me a general. The great Catherine is a good and hospitable person, especially to Turks, particularly when they know the secrets of all the strong places of the Danube.'

"With these hopeful words Ibrahim stretched himself upon the mats and slept the sleep of the just."

. . . . . .

"Well," said my friend Hamed Pasha, after finishing his recital, "do you still pretend that hypnotism is a recent invention, improved by nervous Englishmen? And do you think we Turks need the experiences of your doctors in order to probe the secrets of suggestive science?"

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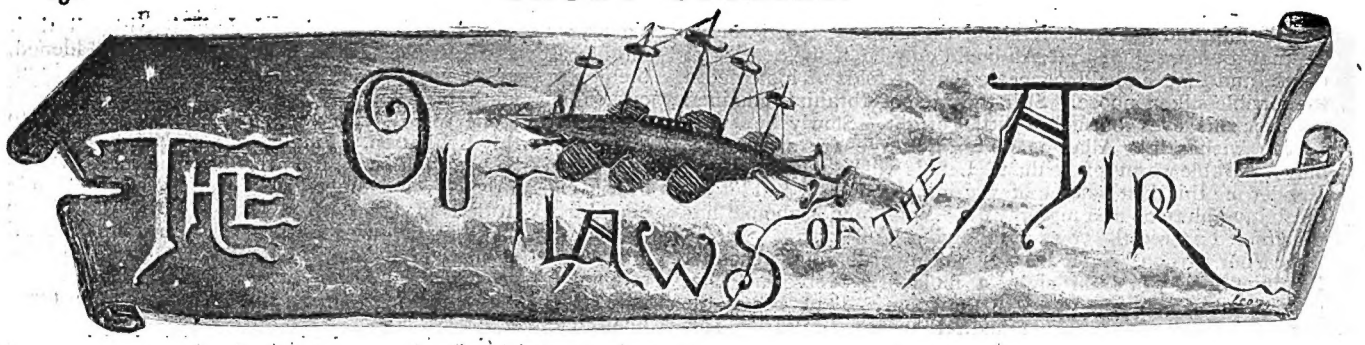

By GEORGE GRIFFITH,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

SUMMARY.

MAX RENAULT, the leading spirit of the Anarchist "Autonomie Group No. 7," meets his colleagues in a club near the Caledonian Road on the eve of President Carnot's assassination. He shoots a traitor who has almost betrayed the Group and so saved Carnot's life. Then he tells them that he is about to emigrate with a society of Socialists, one of whom, Frederick Austen, a wealthy engineer who has been converted to Socialism, takes out with him a working model of an aerial vessel. This air-ship Renault determines to steal when complete, and use for the purpose of bringing about an Anarchist reign of terror. Meanwhile, Franz Hartog is to steal a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer, which is to be built at Elbing for the Russian Government, and, with her, to levy blackmail on the Atlantic, and so raise funds to build an Anarchist aerial fleet.

On Christmas Day, 1898, the *Calypso*, a steam yacht belonging to Sir Harry Milton, sights an island in the South Pacific, from which an electric launch, the *Mermaid*, puts off and tows the yacht in. Frank Markham, in command of the launch, tells Sir Harry, with whom are travelling his sister, Violet, and Herbert Wyndham, a lieutenant in the British Navy, on sick leave, that the island is Utopia, a Socialist Colony, founded some three years before by emigrants from England. On the island Sir Harry finds Frederick Austen, an old friend of his father's, who introduces the visitors to Edward Adams and Max Renault and the rest of the Utopians, and after lunch tells them the story of Utopia. Later on, Lieutenant Wyndham describes the outrages committed by the vessel Hartog has stolen from Elbing—on the Atlantic, and Mr. Austen vows that if no one else can sink the *Destroyer* the Utopians will. Wyndham inspects the *Nautilus*, which the Utopians are building, and which he finds to be a novel but most formidable craft, and late that night, when the Lieutenant and Sir Harry are taking a stroll upon the hills, they are astounded by the apparition of an air-ship soaring across the mountains in the interior of the island. The next morning Sir Harry and Wyndham further discuss the problem raised by the appearance of the air-ship, and the latter determines to resign his commission and throw in his lot with the Utopians; but just as he is telling Sir Harry this, Renault appears unexpectedly and interrupts their conversation. A week later, a pic-nic is held on Mount Plato. Wyndham and Violet are lost sight of during the afternoon, and, as the others are searching for them, they see the air-ship rise from the crater of Mount Orient, and as it does so something white falls from its deck back into the crater. Sir Harry, Adams, and Dora go to Mount Orient to investigate, while Lucy Summers rides back for help. Wyndham is found stabbed in the back on the platform on which Adams tells Sir Harry that the air-ship was built, while Violet is discovered suspended in the top of a great palm-tree on to which she has fallen in throwing herself out of the air-ship in which Renault has tried to carry her off. They rescue her, and find her alive though still unconscious. Meanwhile the rest of the party have arrived at the crater. Sir Harry tells the Utopians that he has determined to devote his life and fortune to punishing Renault, and when Wyndham recovers consciousness he remembers when he last saw Renault in England—in the Dock at Bow Street charged with being an Anarchist.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

CHAPTER XI.

A SOLILOQUY IN MID-AIR.

"'MONARCH of all I survey.' Ah! I wonder what poor old Cowper would have made Robinson Crusoe say if he could have imagined him in such a position as this. 'Free as air' is not the word for it, for the air isn't free, because I am its master. No, riding on the wings of the wind—that is more like it, and yet even that doesn't do, for my wings are my own by right of, well, we'll say conquest, though I suppose respectable society would find another name for it, and the wind—the tamed, subjugated wind—only holds them up like the passive, conquered slave that I have made it!

"No, there are no words to describe it. It is too glorious, too transcendent for words, this conquest of the air really achieved at last, the realisation of all the dreams of flight from the days of Dædalus until now. Look, look, my eyes, for you have never beheld such a scene as this before nor have the eyes of any mortal man before me, *moi, Max Renault, véritable roi des airs!* For what is mere commonplace ballooning to this when you know that your balloon is but the slave, the plaything, of every breath of air that blows, a mere helpless straw floating about without will hither and thither in the currents of the ocean of atmosphere?

"Bah, what is that compared with this? A touch on one lever or another and I fly to right or left, dive to the surface of the sea or soar beyond the clouds, just as my turn of fancy may suggest. And look at those islands down yonder, those snow-ringed gems of emerald set on the sapphire shield of the sea, look how they rise in front of me and go dropping away behind me, and how those few fleecy clouds that I could leap over with a single bound come flying towards me as if to greet their new comrade of the air!

"Ah! a hundred miles an hour, with another twenty or thirty in hand for a pinch, and an ocean of which I am the only navigator stretching above me and below me, in front and behind and on either hand, wider than the wide world itself, open and free and all mine, mine alone among all the sons of men. I, the Magellan, the Columbus of the new world, the realm of air that I have conquered; I, to whom land and sea and air are open; to whom the most secret places of the world, where no human foot has trodden, must be open as the daylight; whose gaze, if I but will it, may explore even the unseen solitudes of the Poles; I, who can outsoar the vultures and outrace the storm.

"The unseen solitudes of the Poles."

"Glorious! glorious! and yet, alas! not quite so glorious as it might have been. Ah, *ma belle Violette*, why were you such a misguided little fool as to go and break that pretty neck of yours on those pitiless rocks instead of being sensible and coming to share this empire of the air

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with me—with me who loved you, for the time being at any rate, better than Anarchy itself, or even Lea, the proud and fair, herself—fairest of the Daughters of Destruction?

"*Peste*, what a fool the girl was to lose her life and a share of the empire of the world, for a silly superstition called honour, and because she thought she loved someone else, as I suppose she did. And that Lieutenant, *qui le diable l'emporte*—as he possibly has done by this time.

"I think I struck home, for he went over like a stuck sheep—better, in fact, for he never gave a kick—and he deserved it, for if it hadn't been for him I could have worked that beautiful scheme of mine out to the end, and shouldn't have been forced to come away in a hurry like this without a bomb or a gun or an ounce of ammunition on board, except a rifle and a couple of revolvers, and a few hundred cartridges.

"I wonder what evil twist of fate brought him to Utopia, just him—one man out of the few dozens that were in the police-court that day and saw me in the dock from which British justice so kindly released me. He must have remembered sooner or later, and then I suppose he would have denounced me as an Anarchist and member of Autonomie Group No. 7, and then—malediction!—he might have spoiled everything, for those virtuous Socialists might have believed him, and requested me to leave—without the air-ship—or, anyhow, they'd have watched me so that I couldn't have got her.

"No, I think I was right to take Fortune by the forelock when I did. At any rate, I have got the ship, and that's the main thing, and as soon as I can get her armed, with the able assistance of Franz and the others, I'll go back to Utopia and make a wilderness of it. I wish I'd had a chance of killing old Austen before I left. I wonder whether he has told the secret to Adams or anyone else; but if he hasn't, he's bound to do so now, and I'll have to wipe the lot out before they can build another air-ship.

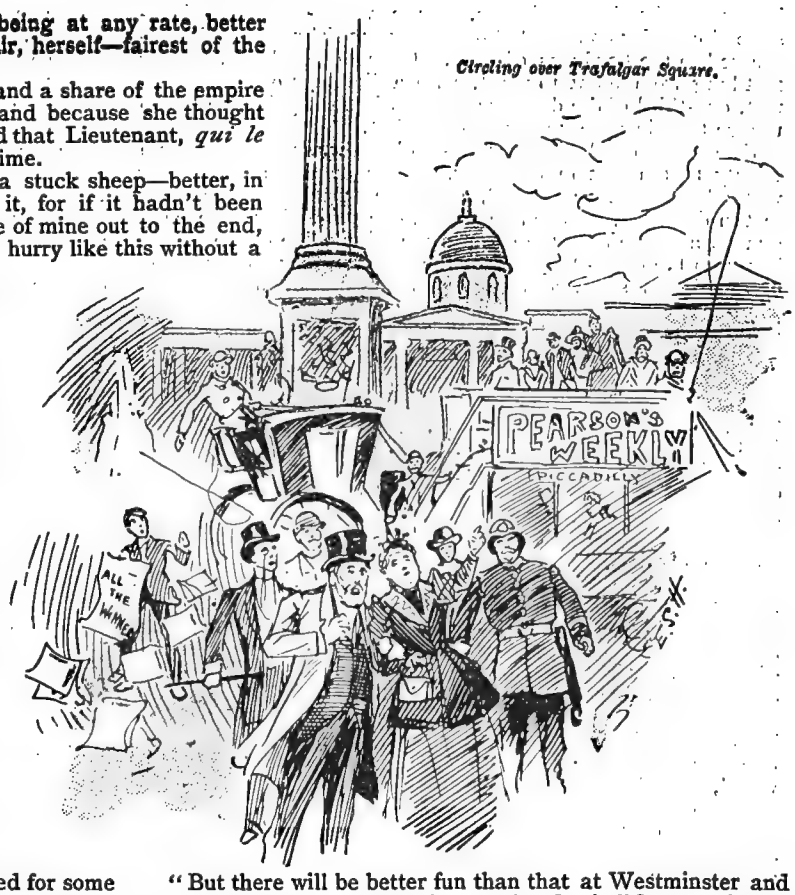
"I don't expect they'll get the *Nautilus* launched for some time if that battery that I connected with the fuel reservoir only works properly. I think the clockwork was all right, and would make the connection at the proper time. If it does, it will blow half of her into the basin, and not leave much of the other half together. Pity I had to do the work in the dark, but if I'd showed a light some prying fool would have been sure to see it, and then—phew! they'd have hung me like a dog, and I suppose in one sense I should have deserved it!

"Ah, well, I must look for the best, and get back there as soon as I can. What a scare there must have been in Utopia last night. By the way, what shall I call my pretty cruiser of the air? They were going to call her the *Volante*, but I think I must have something a bit more appropriate than that.

"Yes, that will do; I'll call her the *Vengeur*, since she is to be the first instrument of my revenge upon the accursed society that guillotined my French father for strangling a thief of a lawyer who had ruined him and drove my English mother to—bah! there is no use in troubling about that now. The day of vengeance will soon come now, and when it comes, *sacre!* what fun there will be when Franz has made me some guns and some of those pretty little projectiles that he used to talk about!

"Imagine my beautiful *Vengeur* being sighted some fine morning circling over Trafalgar Square, or the Place de la Concorde, or Broadway, or the Nevski Prospekt. Ah! I can fancy how the crowds will collect under me, how the people would rush out of the houses and the shops, crawling about, like the earth-worms that they are, and pointing up at me and wondering what I am going to do.

"And then think of the fun of a little aerial artillery practice at their expense. The bombs bursting in the middle of the crowds and scattering them, mostly in pieces, in every direction! Think how they'll run shrieking and raising their arms aloft for mercy until they were knocked over just as helpless as a flock of sheep would be in front of a machine gun.



Circling over Trafalgar Square.

"But there will be better fun than that at Westminster and over the Chamber of Deputies on the Quai d'Orsay. Think of the effects of a nicely planted projectile through the windows of what those English call their gilded chamber! A charge of gun-cotton will make a nice mixture with the contents of the Woolsack, and the fragments of M. le President flying about the Chamber of Deputies will be a sight for all the oppressed of the earth to laugh at.

"And it is possible now, all possible! The Queen of England in Windsor Castle, or the Tsar surrounded by all his slavish millions will be no safer from me than the man who is walking along the street. What will the trifling, though meritorious, work of Vaillant and Henri, of Ravachol and Santo, be to what I shall do, flinging my thunderbolts from my aerial throne? Yes, it is splendid, this realisation of the long dreamt-of ideal of human flight! Splendid, splendid!"

Thus mused Max Renault, now no longer a mere conspirator against society, lurking in slums and by-streets, and passing under false guises among his fellow men, but master of an engine of destruction which, if the remainder of his plans only succeeded as his first venture had done, would enable him to bid defiance to the world from the unattainable altitudes of the air; and, more than that, to hurl death and destruction, to which no effective reply could be made, wherever his fancy bade him strike his blows.

Somewhat bombastic as his soliloquy would no doubt have sounded had there been other ears than his own to listen to it, yet, when stripped of the rhetoric with which his French blood endowed it, it was nothing but sober fact. He had boasted of nothing that he could not accomplish. For the time being he was master of the air, and therefore an enemy that the mightiest State on earth would have good reason to fear, since he alone of all its enemies would strike straight at its heart, paralyse its directing will, and reduce its organisation to chaos in a few days or weeks of terrorism, as the case might be.

The craft that was bearing him through the air at a speed of a hundred miles an hour, two thousand feet above the sun-lit

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bosom of the broad Pacific, was a very elongated cigar-shaped cylinder constructed of *papier maché*, rolled and compressed to the hardness of steel. It was a hundred and fifty feet long from point to point, with a diameter of twenty-five feet, one-third of the distance from its forward point, and from thence tapering away astern to four feet.

Five horizontal helices, or six-bladed screws, ranging from twenty to ten feet in diameter, worked on five short strong vertical masts above the hull, and three propellors, each seven feet in diameter, revolved on shafts, one projecting from each quarter and one from the stern in the middle line of the vessel. Through the cross-diameter of the hull ran four hollow shafts of aluminium steel, and each of these carried a somewhat wing-shaped aeroplane of lattice work, the slats of which could be opened and shut like those of a venetian blind.

The upper part of the hull was fitted with long windows of toughened glass, covered with external blinds to moderate the light in the interior or to keep off the too intense heat of the sun when necessary. In the sides and bow there were other windows which, on emergency, could be protected by slides of aluminium steel, which gave an uninterrupted view ahead and on either side of the air-ship.

Forward of the foremost mast was a conning-tower of oval shape, seven feet by five, and projecting three feet above the hull. This contained the steering wheel, the lever which controlled the slats of the air-planes and the switches which regulated the speed of the engines, together with a compass, barometer, and a speed-gauge, which indicated at the same time the velocity of the ship and the pressure of the wind on her air-planes.

Renault saw the harbour and city of New York.

It was in this conning-tower that Renault was sitting, with windows on every side of him, commanding an uninterrupted view in every direction as he indulged, as men are wont to do when they are as absolutely alone as he was, in his soliloquy on the prospects that were visible from the extraordinary situation in which he found himself. He had locked the steering wheel and the levers, and the air-ship was speeding along through the uninterrupted ocean of air independently of his attention, needing no further control until it should be necessary to increase her elevation, in order to rise out of sight from the sea or to pass over mountains on land.

It was a couple of hours after sunrise, on the 2nd of January. He had been in the air for a little more than twelve hours, and in that time had traversed over a thousand miles on his way from the Pacific to the Atlantic, across the Isthmus of Panama towards which he was now steering. He had brought away provisions that would last him for a month and there was sufficient supply of motor-fuel on board the air-ship to carry him a distance of twenty thousand miles, or nearly double the distance that he expected to travel before getting into communication with his friends in the *Destroyer*.

The engines of the *Vengeur* were of the same type as those of the *Nautilus*, but, of course, of much lighter build. They were capable of exerting a total force of three thousand horse-power, and were so arranged that the power of the two side engines could be diverted from the quarter propellors and concentrated on the lifting helices when it was necessary to raise the ship vertically from the ground or propel her at such a low speed that the air-planes would not support her of themselves.

The machinery was situated mostly amidships, with the saloon and twelve living cabins forward of it. The hull was pierced for eight guns, two pointing ahead, two astern, and two on each broadside; and there were also five apertures in the floor of the hull for vertical-firing tubes, through which projectiles could be launched at objects directly underneath. All these port-holes were now, of course, covered by aluminium steel slides, and even when the vessel was fully armed none of her armament would be visible until the time came to run the guns out and open fire.

Always flying at the uniform rate of a hundred miles an hour, the *Vengeur* passed north-eastward over the Pacific, across the Isthmus of Panama, at an elevation of six thousand feet, sped unseen over the West Indian archipelago, and then, swinging slightly to the northward ran up the Atlantic, until, on the morning of the fifth day, Renault saw the harbour and city of New York through the breaks in the sunlit ocean of rolling billowy clouds which lay between earth and sea in the serene and cloudless atmosphere in which the *Vengeur* was floating.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE SCENE OF ACTION.

In reaching New York in command of the air-ship, Renault had carried out the first and most important part of his scheme, but from this point his plans were necessarily rather vague.

Before he could do anything definite it was absolutely necessary that he should put himself into communication with Franz Hartog, on whom he would now be obliged to look as his right hand in carrying out the designs on the peace and safety of society at large which had been shaping themselves in his brain for the past three years.

He had accomplished the first and greatest achievement of the war which had already been definitely declared against the established Powers of the world. He had assisted Mr. Austen to work out and put into material form the ideas which his son had conceived, but which he had been destined never to see realised. He had improved upon these, and he had assisted in the working out of every detail with an anxious care which the Utopians had taken as pure zeal for the welfare of the colony.

With his own hands he had worked at the building of the air-ship and the construction of her engines and equipment, and then, when everything was complete, he had made the

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bold and successful stroke which had deprived those who had trusted in him of the fruit of their joint labours and placed him in possession of the only machine in existence that was capable of navigating the air.

This was much, very much, but more had to be done before the *Vengeur* could become the irresistible engine of destruction that he intended her to be. He knew that, skilful and far in advance of his age as he was himself in mechanical genius, he was but as a child in comparison with the eccentric little German who was all brain and no heart, and who, before his departure to Utopia, had furnished him with the plans and designs which had enabled him to pose before his late fellow-colonists as a mechanical inventor of the first order.

He knew that to Franz Hartog, and to him alone, he would have to look for the guns and projectiles which would form the offensive armament of the *Vengeur*. Without his aid she was merely an aerial pleasure cruiser; with it she could be transformed into a war-ship of such terrible power that neither fleets nor fortresses could offer her any resistance worth the mentioning.

Beyond all question Hartog was absolutely necessary to him. So, too, would be a crew of at least eight men to work the ship and man the guns in time of action if the *Vengeur* was to be brought up to the highest possible point of efficiency. There was no doubt about this; but with the conviction of this necessity came an uncomfortable doubt about the possibility of trusting to anyone save himself—yes, even to Franz Hartog, faithful and all as he be eved him to be.

As commander of the *Vengeur* he would occupy an absolutely unique position, a position never before paralleled in the history of the world. He would be above and beyond the reach of all human laws, the wielder of such a power as the earth had never trembled at before, a power which would offer the most dazzling and perhaps irresistible temptation to the usurper who might aspire to reign in his stead.

The buccaneers and pirates of past ages had, with more or less success, held control over their lawless crews, partly by force of personal influence, but chiefly because in their case failure meant capture and capture meant either death on the high seas or a dance on nothing at Execution Dock. Hence, as a rule, the rank and file had preferred to trust themselves to the guidance of the master spirit lest worse might befall them; but there would be no fear of this sort before the eyes of the crew of the *Vengeur*.

To be in possession of the only air-ship in existence meant at once the impossibility of failure and the certainty of escape. There could be no pursuit, and so no capture. The most inaccessible parts of the world would be open to them, and they could take their choice of refuges in a thousand places where no man could follow them.

To command a crew and to keep them disciplined and faithful under such circumstances would mean the exercise of qualities which he might or might not be proved to possess when the hour of trial came. To possess them meant the command of an empire such as no man had ever ruled over before; to be found wanting would mean death by assassination and the ignominious failure of all his splendid and far-reaching plans. That was the alternative, and in the long hours of leisure that the flight of the almost automatic *Vengeur* had afforded him, he had deliberately faced the contingencies in theory and made himself ready to meet them in practice.

And now all there was to be done was to pick up the *Destroyer*, in whatever part of the ocean she might be cruising, accompany her to the secret stronghold which by this time her crew must have discovered, and there elaborate the plans for future action. There was only one course which made it at all possible to arrive at this result, and that course he took.

"This is Saturday morning," he said to himself, "and therefore the very day of all days in the week that I ought to be here, except perhaps Wednesday. Most of the big boats will be leaving New York for England to-day, and if Hartog is still playing the same game, I ought to stand a good chance of falling in with him if I pick up one of the big ones as she passes Sandy Hook and follow her across.

"It'll be rather slow work for a craft like this, but still I can amuse myself running about a bit and seeing if there's any other game in sight. I don't suppose concealment matters very much now, and I may as well go down and see what there is to be seen."

So saying, he left the conning-tower, and went to the engine-room and turned the power of the port and starboard engines on to the horizontal fans. These were so constructed that when they were not in use their blades, working on hinges, fell down beside the masts like the ribs of an umbrella when closed, and could be locked in that position so as to offer the least possible resistance to the air. As soon as they were unlocked and the masts began to revolve they opened automatically and spread themselves out, and the higher the speed at which they revolved the more rigidly they were retained in their proper position.

Revolving at half-speed they just sustained the weight of the air-ship without the assistance of the air-planes. With the midship engine driving the vessel at forty miles an hour, the air-planes would sustain her without the assistance of the helices. From this it will be seen that the *Vengeur* possessed an ample margin of power to suffice for the performance of any possible manœuvres.

With the suspensory fans revolving at half speed, and the midship propellor working just fast enough to give steering way to the vessel, Max dropped her gently through the clouds, and in half-an-hour was hanging close under them, and about fifteen hundred feet over New York Harbour. Every part of the *Vengeur* was painted a dull neutral grey, and he felt pretty well satisfied that at that altitude it would be quite impossible for anyone on land or water to make him out against the grey background of the clouds.

The wharves of Hoboken, Jersey City, and Brooklyn were already busy in preparation for the departure of the out-bound liners, and Renault, with a pair of powerful field-glasses, watched them carefully for the first signs of the big ships putting to sea. The morning, though cloudy, was a good one for seeing, and he could easily make out the distinguishing funnels of the different liners as they lay alongside their wharves.

He saw the red funnels with black tops and two black lines under them of a big Cunarder; the black funnels with the horizontal white stripe of a ship of the American line; the plain yellow funnels of a North German Lloyd boat over on the Hoboken side; and the black-topped yellow funnels of a huge White Star liner on the New York side.

All these had the Blue Peter flying, showing that they were ready to put to sea as soon as the tide suited. Nine o'clock came after he had waited nearly an hour and a half, and then one by one they began to cast off and work out into the stream. They steamed away slowly at first, but with ever-increasing speed, past the Battery, between Brooklyn and the Statue of Liberty, through the Narrows, and so on round Sandy Hook. Huge as they were, they looked little more than toy steamboats floating on the surface of a lake at the altitude from which Renault watched them.

Gradually one of them, a great three-funnelled

"Hullo, what the deuce are those things out there?"

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White Star liner, began to draw ahead of the others, fast as they were now going.

"Ah, I suppose that's the White Star boat *Gigantic* that they were building when I left England to beat the *Campania* and *Lucania*," said Renault, as he put the *Vengeur* after them, keeping her close up under the clouds. "It doesn't matter which the others are, she's my game for the present. I can't go very far wrong in keeping her in sight, but I daresay they will keep pretty much together for the rest of the day. They are travelling pretty fast, considering the great lumbering floating hotels that they are.

"The *Gigantic*, if it's her, is not making much less than twenty-five knots, but what's that to the forty the little *Destroyer* can do, or the hundred and forty that I could make the *Vengeur* fly at if I was in a hurry! If I only had her properly armed and could pick Franz up out in mid-Atlantic, we'd hold the whole crowd up between us, as the Yankees would say, and—*tonnerre de Dieu*—what tons of plunder we'd get out of them! We should have to collar one of them to take it home with us, wherever home may be for us.

"Hullo, what the deuce are those things out there? A couple of cruisers as sure as I'm lord of the air! Yes, and a brace of torpedo boats in attendance on each of them. That means a convoy. Bravo Franz! You must have made it pretty hot for them on the Atlantic to make anything like that necessary, and it also means that you're expected, so I suppose we shall see some fun before we get across.

"Oh, that I only had my guns and ammunition on board, and then I wouldn't mind if they had a fleet waiting for you!"

Renault had drawn his conclusions correctly. The terrorism exercised by the Anarchists afloat on the Atlantic had reached such a pitch that the American and British Governments had been compelled to enter into an agreement in virtue of which an American squadron of fast cruisers and torpedo boats convoyed each flotilla of liners from New York to a midway station on the Atlantic, where they were met by a similar British squadron which convoyed the liners into English waters. In addition to this precaution all the liners had themselves been converted into cruisers and fitted with quick-firing and machine guns so as to be able to take care of themselves in an emergency.

To within 800 feet of the masthead of the "Gigantic."

As soon as they were picked up by the liners the cruisers stationed themselves one on each side of the line which they formed at a distance of about four miles. Two of the torpedo boats ran out a couple of miles ahead as scouts and the other two brought up the rear about the same distance astern, and so, apparently secure from any attack save by an overwhelming force which under the circumstances could not possibly be brought against them, the flotilla proceeded on its way.

There was only one weak point in the arrangement, and that was due to the inevitable rivalry of the competing lines. The Blue Ribbon of the Atlantic was still as jealously coveted and as eagerly striven for as ever, pirate or no pirate. The *Gigantic*—for such the White Star liner really was—had been built to cross the ocean in five days, and she was expected to do it, so she took up the running and gradually forged ahead.

When the second morning dawned, Renault, looking down from the clouds, saw her over fifteen miles ahead of the other liners and about ten miles ahead of the foremost cruiser, with the two torpedo boats some four miles off either quarter. Behind the cruiser came the Cunarder, and far away astern he could just make out the smoke of the Lloyd and American liners and the two torpedo boats that were bringing up the rear of the long procession. Another twenty-four hours' run would bring the White Star boat within touch of the British squadron, and two or three hours after her the others would come up.

Every now and then other liners, with here and there a cruiser and a torpedo boat or two, were met coming in the other direction. In fact, as Renault said to himself, the Atlantic looked more as though half the nations of Europe were at war rather than an ocean highway in time of perfect international peace.

The second night came down dark and misty, but on a moderately smooth sea, and Renault, showing no lights, ran down to within eight hundred feet of the mast-heads of the *Gigantic*. She was now nearly twenty miles ahead of the rest of the flotilla. He could make her out easily by the lights that were gleaming from her decks and port holes, and he recognised that if Franz was on the war-path on the Atlantic track and had any designs upon her, as he probably would have, seeing that she was the fastest, biggest, and richest prize of the lot, he would have to act before morning, for by daybreak the British squadron would probably be in sight, and he would also have to run the gauntlet of the more numerous convoys and other warships that might possibly be cruising in the more crowded waters of the Eastern Atlantic.

Considering the force that was within such a short distance,

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Max, in spite of his anxiety to fall in with his comrades, half hoped that they would keep out of the way. Perhaps they were not on that part of the Atlantic at all. They might be on the African coast in the track of the Cape steamers, or down South waiting for some of the South American liners bound to Colon or Monte Video, or even away in the Indian Ocean playing havoc among the east bound steamers.

Thus, turning over the chances in his mind, he kept in touch of the *Gigantic* until close on midnight. The two torpedo boats were now about eight miles astern of her and the cruiser five miles behind them. Suddenly a beam of light shot up out of the ocean astern, then vanished, and was repeated again three times in quick succession. Renault didn't understand it, but those on board the *Gigantic* recognised it as a danger signal which meant "stop and close up."

"Ah, that means something," said Renault, "I'll go back and see what it's all about."

He had taken what sleep he needed during the day, so that he could spend the night on watch in the conning-tower, for he felt sure that if anything happened it would be under cover of the darkness. He swung the *Vengeur* round, and, quickening her up to sixty miles an hour, darted back towards the cruiser which had shown the signal. Less than fifteen minutes brought him over the war-ship, which was now flashing her electric rays rapidly in all directions over the water. He stopped and watched for a few minutes, circling slowly overhead, and soon their light revealed a strange spectacle to him.

The two torpedo boats, evidently badly rammed, were fast settling down, and the cruiser was rushing up to them at full speed, still flashing her search-lights ahead and to both sides of her. Just as she came up with them, one of the long beams fell upon a grey, low-lying, swiftly-moving object in the dark water to the south-east. Instantly a storm of thunder and flame burst from her decks, and a tempest of projectiles swept over the waves in the direction of the fast flying assailant that had done her work so silently and with such terrible effect.

(To be continued.)

BROWN BREDD.

JUST as sure as a man is mentally lopsided, just so sure is he, sooner or later, to ring my doorbell. I am his Mecca; and he travels in my direction with a degree of persistency which has at times been appalling.

John Brown Bredd was one of this sort. He was the most pathetic and simple-hearted creature I ever saw. The first time he called on me he brought a picture for sale.

"I don't claim to be an artist," he said in plaintive tones, as he uncovered the picture for my inspection; "but I hope to be. That, at any rate," and he sighed profoundly, "is my dream."

I couldn't say much to encourage him, for the work was badly done.

"No, it's not worthy of a place on your walls," he continued, in a broken voice. "Ah! that is a Leighton. And that is a Herkomer, and here is a Solomon."

He stood for several minutes examining these pictures without saying a word. "I think I had better take my canvas away," he moaned at length.

"Some time, perhaps, you may be willing to purchase an example of my work; but," with a shake of the head, "not now—not now. I am convinced of that."

I couldn't stand the man's tragic manner and thrust a £5 note into his hands.

"Oh, no," he cried, in broken tones, "not that. Please don't offer me charity, I couldn't endure to take money from a stranger." He placed the note on the table, looked at it for an instant as though his heart would break, and then turned abruptly away.

Of course, I bought the picture. I would have done so if it had taken my last shilling. Poor Brown! He had no more power to cope with the world than a child has to wrestle with a giant. In stature he was a man; in all other respects he was a baby in arms.

The constant hunt for something to eat was his torment. "When I get to heaven," he piteously said, on one occasion, "I shall have a body minus digestive organs. That is something I look forward to with very high anticipations. Just think of it! We shall not need to eat! What a glorious prospect!"

And yet Brown had an aspiration, and because of that aspiration I thought him a crank.

One day we sat together in his studio, talking. I had visited him quite a number of times, and was getting to be fond of the unpractical fellow. My interest in him had warmed his heart, a smile lighted up his face, and he became communicative.

On the easel was a portrait which I had never seen before. It was really a superb piece of work, and I wondered where he had borrowed it. Indeed, I hinted as much, but he replied:

"No, I painted that myself. I have been at it now for four years and six months. I don't believe I shall live to finish it. Do you like it?"

"Why, Brown," I answered, "you've got genius. Nothing but the 'divine afflatus' could account for what you have done. As for these landscapes——"

"Don't mention them," he broke in, with strange impetuosity. "They are nothing. I earn my bread with them; but I hope, some time, to earn fame with this."

"That flesh tint is really fine," I said with enthusiasm. "And those eyes——; but tell me, Brown, is it an ideal or a portrait?"

"A portrait," he answered, and I noticed that his lips trembled. "Ah, I can never do her justice. She is beyond my skill; and yet, you see, I am trying my best."

"You must introduce me when she comes to sit," I suggested. "Such a beautiful creature is worth knowing."

"She is beautiful, isn't she?" Then he laid down his pipe. "So—so—so very beautiful!" and he fell into a reverie.

"May I not see her?" I asked.

"In good time, perhaps," he answered.

"Pray when, my dear fellow? You see I am beginning to get excited."

"After death; not before," he replied, with solemn emphasis. "Then you shall pay us a visit. She will be glad to see you, and grateful for what you have done."

"But her name?" I asked.

"I don't know; I have forgotten," he replied; and a profound shade of sadness fell on his face. He sank into a chair, heaved a deep sigh; and it seemed to me that there were tears in his eyes.

"I don't know her name, my friend; I have really forgotten it."

"And you don't know anything about her, Brown?" I inquired, with marked surprise.

"Yes, I know something; but not much."

"And you will tell me?"

"Certainly, if you wish to know. She is my wife."

"Come," I said, going to his side and placing my hand on his shoulder—"come, Brown, your nerves are unstrung. Get out of this dingy hole into the fresh air. It will brighten you up. You've been working too hard, and it has told on you."

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He looked up at me wearily. "No; I don't need fresh air. I get all I want here. I need to die, that is all. This life is my nightmare. I shake myself a dozen times a day to wake myself up. In vain. I must work the problem out as best I can. But"—and he rose to his feet and stood facing me, white as snow—"but no man longs for death as I do. The galley slave looks forward to the time when his chains will drop. He plies the oar with a bleeding heart, and yet there is a ray of hope in his life. I am that slave. I have that hope. By-and-bye I shall really wake up, and then I shall begin to live."

I was too astonished to speak.

"Can I tell you a secret?" he asked.

"Of course, Brown; tell me everything," I answered.

There was a wild gleam in his eyes, like that of a hunted deer, which touched me to the heart. "They call it catalepsy, but it isn't. I tell you on my honour, it isn't. They don't know what they are talking about. They are all fools, to whom the mysteries of the other life are incomprehensible."

"You have been talking with a doctor, then?"

"Yes, yes; a dozen of them," he answered impatiently, and with a gesture of the hand as though he brushed them all aside. "They are interested in my case, and tell me it is unlike anything in the books."

"Catalepsy, Brown?"

"Bah!" he cried with disdain. "What do they know about it? I tell you it is not catalepsy. On the contrary, it is the only thing that makes my life endurable. I wouldn't give it up for the right to pawn the Koh-i-Noor."

"But tell me about it," I cried. "Give me the details, and let me judge for myself."

"Sit down, then," he said, very gloomily. I noticed that his lips were twitching, and he had no rest for a few minutes before he could begin the recital of his strange experiences.

"You will hold this secret sacred?"

What a pathos there was in his tones. He seemed like a man pleading for his life.

"I couldn't tell everyone," he said slowly, almost under his breath, "but somehow I feel safe with you. I can't keep it to myself any longer, for fear——," and he hesitated.

"For fear of what, Brown?"

"For fear I might be buried alive!" and he shuddered. "You will see that that never happens to me, won't you?"

I assured him that I would take charge of his body if anything that resembled death should supervene; and he breathed more freely.

"You see," he continued, "I have had these alleged attacks for nearly five years; it will be five years on the fifteenth of next month. They come regularly twice a week, and last on an average four hours, though once in a while much longer."

I nodded my head, and he went on:

"When I fall into this state my soul is wide awake, but my body becomes entirely useless. I am like a man who has been chained to a ringbolt in the floor. I tug at my bonds, and, so far, have always managed to slip my hands through them. Until I have done that I suffer agonies which can't be described. But when I am free, when I have got away from my body, oh, how beautiful it all is!

"My dear friend, it may seem incredible to you, but my real life is the one I then enjoy. This, which you call life, is a dreadful nightmare. I don't belong here, I belong there. The moment I get out of my body I find myself at the garden gate of my other home, and am met by my wife and our three children."

I opened my eyes in wonder. What was coming next?

"Yes," he went on mournfully, "there is no reason why you shouldn't be like the rest of them and vote me a maniac. Still, I am telling you the exact truth.

"My estate over yonder is a very valuable one; it is situated on the banks of a river, which a few miles further on stretches out into a lake. My orchards are rich in fruit, and from their character, I judge that the house is situated somewhere in the Tropics. I have orange and lemon trees in large abundance, and pomegranates and figs, and everything that the appetite can desire. Poor as I am while here, I am rich the instant I get there.

"The hours during which my catalepsy lasts are changed into weeks on the further shore. And how I enjoy them! wandering along the highway with my little ones climbing the hill-tops to get a glimpse of the far-away mountains, sitting during the placid and heavenly evening with my dear wife, reading some favourite author or discussing some favourite theme."

"And that?" I said, pointing to the easel.

"That is a portrait of my wife," he answered, growing pale as he spoke, and heaving a deep sigh. "But it doesn't do her justice. The poor pigments with which I work lack brilliancy of colour, and the genius in my finger-tips is too—too meagre. Ah, you should see that woman, my friend—you should see her!"

There were tears in his eyes.

"I am sure you will like her," he continued; "and she would certainly like you, both for yourself and for what you have done in my behalf.

"When my respite is at an end I hear distant bells ring; and the family go with me as far as the walls which limit our property, and bid me good-bye.

"I come back to the dingy apartment, and crawl into my half-worn body. My eyes open, the past returns to me like a dream, and I take up once more the dull routine of an unhappy life."

"But, my dear Brown," I asked, "when you are once away, and in such a glorious environment, why don't you stay away?"

"I dare not," he answered. "It would be a crime. I have been tempted to do so; but no, it wouldn't be right. For some reason beyond my ken, fate dooms me to return. There will come a time, however," and his eyes glistened—"there will come a time when fate shall say, 'Go back no more'; and then, shall I not be glad?"

"And you wish me——," I asked.

"To keep guard over my body until it is quite certain I shall not return, and then see that it is properly buried. Look, here is a second key to my room. Come when you please, and if I, my soul, am not here to greet you, do for me what I would gladly do for you under like circumstances. I know I am asking a great deal, but there is no one else in whom I can confide."

I gave the required promise and went home.

Three days afterward I saw him, and said jocosely: "Well, Brown, you are still here."

"Yes," he replied, "but I don't believe it is for long. The picture is well nigh finished. It is not what it should be, but it's all I can hope to make it. That done, I shall go."

"Cheer up, my dear fellow, cheer up. There's many a year for you yet, and perhaps good luck besides."

But I couldn't move him to a smile. "I shall cheer up," he said, "when I feel that this strange servitude to the flesh is over, and I can be permanently with those I love. That, my friend, will be good luck indeed."

I visited him frequently. He chatted very freely about the other home, told me of various dimly-remembered incidents which had occurred in his family, and seemed, on the whole, to be getting into a brighter mood than in the old days.

This cheerfulness increased perceptibly. He reminded me constantly of a man who is packing up his worldly goods and making ready for a glorious meeting with those from whom he has long been separated.

The last time I saw him he was decidedly jovial. "It is done," he cried, pointing to the portrait. "I have laid the brush to the canvas for the last time."

"And now, what will you do with it?" I asked.

"My hope of being remembered by my kind," he answered, very impressively, "rests on that picture. It is my life's work. You have been kind enough to say that it shows genius. If others agree with you, I am satisfied; yes, much more than satisfied. I shall go hence with the consciousness that I have not lived in vain."

He hesitated, and for a moment seemed absorbed in meditation. Then, looking up, he continued: "I would like, if it is possible, and if I am not present at the time, to have you take charge of it. Perhaps the committee at the Academy

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may be willing to accept it. Then you will see that it is properly hung."

I was deeply touched by the poor fellow's manner and by his modesty. The picture was certainly worthy of exhibition, and I had very little doubt that it would attract popular attention.

I recalled a line written by Richard Crashaw more than two hundred years ago—one line, which keeps his memory green. It is embedded in the memory and the admiration of mankind. It runs thus :—

"The conscious water saw its God and blushed."

That line is immortal; it cannot die. So long as this language lasts it will be repeated. Two centuries have not dimmed its lustre. Twenty more will pass, and these words will retain their beauty. The ordinary scholar knows little of Crashaw, and cares less.

He did not fill a large place in the literature of the world; but he left one line, eight wonderful words, which will give him a warm place in our hearts until the sun sets for the last time. He wrote very extensively, and it has all some degree of merit; but his fame is held secure by that line alone.

My good friend Bredd, I thought, displayed no genius in his other works; but this one—well, it is a miracle. It ought to make him known; and I will use my best endeavour to afford him fair play with the public. It was easy for me, therefore, to promise that I would urge his claim at the Academy.

He took my hand in both his and said, in a choked and broken voice: "Sometime I will tell you how grateful I am. It is not for my sake, however, that I desire this, but for hers. Yes," he added slowly, "I think it will please her."

"Well, my dear Brown," I said, "there is one thing more."

"What is that?"

"I would like to know what final disposition you would like made of that picture. The exhibition will be open for only a few weeks, and then?"

"What would please me best——" he began, and then stopped.

"Well? Lay your heart bare, Bredd."

"What would please me best would be to know that it was hung on the walls of some public gallery where people might see it. And yet——"

"Speak your wish, my dear fellow, and if it is within the range of my personal influence, it shall be accomplished."

"I know it—I know it," he replied. "If you won't think me presumptuous——"

"Go on, tell me all. You may not have another chance."

"True, very true. Then, if you are willing to accept the picture as a token of my regard, I should like to think of it on your walls in company with the great artists whose works are already there."

"What! Do you mean that you will give the picture to me?"

"For the term of your natural life, yes. After your death, perhaps, you will bequeath it to the National Gallery, or some other institution of that sort. Will you accept it?"

I confess that the fellow nearly broke my heart with his tenderness and gentleness, his plaintive tone, and the air of sadness which seemed to envelop him.

"Accept it!" I replied eagerly. "With a thousand thanks, and a thousand more when those are done. But, see! You have forgotten to put your name in the corner."

With a few deft strokes of the brush he wrote on the edge of the robe which fell from the shoulders of the portrait, Brown Bredd.

"Now then, my work-day is over. As for these traps," turning to various pictures scattered over the room, "I don't care what becomes of them. Let them go. But this one——"

"Shall be my chief treasure," I said.

He nodded his head, and the subject was dropped.

That was on Wednesday. Two days later I received a scrawl from him. It was evidently written with a trembling hand, and the signature could hardly be identified. He was apparently labouring under some great excitement. The note said:

"Bring your key and come into my studio to-morrow about sundown. I think I shall not return this time; but I may be mistaken. If I do, I shall be glad to greet you; if not, God bless you and good-bye. Remember my last wishes; and, when you leave, take the portrait with you."

"After all," I said to myself, "this is a mere hallucination. Brown Bredd is an interesting crank, nothing more. These travels of which he has spoken are beautiful delusions. They are, of course, the result of some nervous disease, and he's just as likely to live as I am."

Still, when I knocked at his door I was not surprised to receive no answer. Then I knocked louder; but there was no response. After fumbling over my bunch I found the right key, and with it effected an entrance.

Looking towards the bed, on which he usually lay when these curious attacks came on, I saw that it was empty. I shrugged my shoulders, with the feeling that I had been duped, that my sympathy with the painter had run away with my common sense.

Almost instantly, however, I saw a sight that made my heart stand still. There, in the high-backed chair, directly in front of the easel, sat Brown Bredd, his face as white as the snows of December. He was leaning back, as artists frequently do when critically examining a new picture; and his eyes were half shut, apparently to get the full effect of the work.

His hands hung at his side, from one of which had dropped the brush and from the other the pallet. On his lips was a pleasant smile, as though he were in the act of bidding some one good morning.

It was a strange and thrilling spectacle, and it seemed almost gruesome to be alone with him in the deepening shadows of that room. I couldn't believe my eyes at first, and so cried: "Well, Brown, how goes it?" He did not stir. I put my hand on his brow! It was stone cold.

That wonderful story that he had told me came vividly to mind with painful violence. It was true, after all; and after all Brown Bredd was not so much a crank as I had supposed.

The portrait now hangs in my room, the souvenir of a very odd experience. And every time I look at it I say: "Brown is happy now with his family amid the orange groves of that other shore."

£2 2s. FOR A PLOT.

I take it for granted that, on the whole, the readers of this paper are very fair judges of a good story. Moreover, there are undoubtedly a large number of people among them who are capable of devising excellent plots for stories, while they are not gifted with the necessary ability for working them up into readable form.

It seems to me a pity that such good material should be forced by lack of opportunity to lie dormant, and with a view to seeing what readers are capable of in this direction, I offer a couple of Guineas for what I consider to be the most striking plot for a short story.

The scene may be laid anywhere, and only a rough outline should be given, embodied in a paragraph of not more than a hundred and fifty words. Any number of attempts may be sent by each competitor, but each attempt must be on a separate sheet of paper, with the name and address of the sender on the back. Competitions to be enclosed in an envelope marked "PLOT," and to reach this office by Tuesday, October 30th.

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A TRAPPER TRAGEDY.

HE first gleam of dawn quivers in the eastern sky over the snow-covered plains that stretch away to the cities. The settlement by the shores of Lake Winnipeg lies hushed in sleep. Not a voice nor a footfall breaks the cold silence that reigns over the few log cabins, where live the grave-faced trappers of the lakes.

The snow has ceased falling, but a few feathery flakes hover in the chilly air, sinking slowly, swayed from side to side by the soft current of air that is too weak even to move the snow-laden branches of the pines.

Hark! An angry voice!

A fierce hubbub follows, shrieks and cries rend the air for a few moments, and then all is silent.

The trappers come out of their log cabins one by one and hurry towards the spot where lies the victim of this, the first murder that has ever sullied the record of the settlement.

They gather round the little form, whose life's blood is staining the trodden snow by her side. They carry her tenderly into the nearest hut and lay her before the log fire, staunching the blood with their handkerchiefs and bathing the wound with warm water.

Poor little Nell! There was not a man among them who would have spoken a harsh word to her, much less have raised his hand to strike her. She had brought sunshine into their thankless, dreary lives, and to her they had shown all the tenderness of which they were capable.

The rugged faces that stared in through the narrow doorway were graver than ever, and more than one pair of eyes glistened with a brightness that betrayed the presence of unwonted moisture. To lose Nell was to lose a loving friend the world could never replace in their hearts.

But what of the murderer? He stood defiantly in the midst of a group of hard-visaged men, awaiting the sentence which all knew must come. The mad rage which had prompted him to do the deed still burned in his heart, and every rude buffet and bitter word was met with low mutterings, the significance of which was fully understood.

He was not one of them. Only the day before had he come into the settlement with another trapper, and on the morrow they were going on their way. But only one of them would go, the other would stop; the grim, hard-faced men who stood about him would answer for that.

There seemed to be no motive for the foul deed. Nell, poor little Nell, shared a cabin with Mother Samson, and was the old woman's pet. Mother Samson, when she came on the scene, declared solemnly that she had seen Nell into her bed the previous night, and that everything about the house was snug and in order, and that there was no obvious reason whatever why she should have gone out during the hours of darkness. The door was ajar when she got up, and Nell must have gone out that way.

Had this blackhearted villain, this Donald, as he was called, induced her to leave her home and escape with him to the cities? And had she repented at the last moment, and attempted to return to her home, while he, in a paroxysm of rage, had fallen upon her and murdered her? Or had he entered the cabin and stolen her from her bed, killing her when she awoke and cried for help?

They removed him to an empty hut and locked him inside, one of them mounting guard over the door with a loaded gun, primarily with the object of preventing his escape, and secondarily for stopping any one of their number who, through feelings of humanity, might be tempted to let him go free and unpunished.

During the next hour, as dawn broadened into daylight, anxious inquirers were continually passing to and from the log cabin where little Nell lay slowly dying; for all knew too well that the terrible gash across her fair throat was her death wound.

Nor were they mistaken. Before another half hour had passed the news flew from mouth to mouth that their little friend, the cheerer of their rugged hearts, the sunshine of their lives, little Nell, had passed away.

Under the shadow of a great pine, close to the frozen waters that fringed the banks of the great lake, they dug a little grave in the snow, and laid to rest the last remains of her who had come out from the Old Country years ago, and grown up and lived amongst them, beloved by all.

Then, sad at heart, the little group tramped over the crisp snow back to the settlement, the sorrow in their breasts, as they neared the presence of the murderer, becoming smothered by a yearning for revenge, a longing desire to satiate their anger on the body of the brute who had taken from them their little Nell.

At the prison door they paused.

What form should the punishment take? This they had not yet decided.

"I be for shootin' 'im, right thar," said Denvers, a grizzled old trappist, fingering his Colt.

"Yes, rope 'im up with a dozen yards, an' let 'im dodge the slugs."

"Two shots apiece at fifty yards."

"Agreed."

They opened the door, looked inside, and found Donald lying peacefully sleeping in a corner, on a heap of straw.

He was seized and led along the open way between the two rows of huts that in any civilised village would have been called a street.

Several of the men dropped into their cabins as they passed to get their revolvers, in anticipation of the sport to come.

Mother Samson came to her door with the express purpose of shouting her last maledictions upon the head of her darling's murderer. She was a forcible woman at all times, and now the men who formed the body-guard had some difficulty in preventing her from attacking the doomed Donald, who walked defenceless in their midst.

A stake was driven through the snow, into the hard ground beneath, and to this the victim was fastened by a thong round his neck, with a sufficiently lengthy piece of rope to permit his moving freely in a circle of about five yards radius.

Then the whole band moved off to a distance, and prepared to shoot.

The victim stood resolutely facing his torturers, his eyes fixed steadily on all their movements.

Denvers, by reason of his age and experience, invariably took the lead in all the combined movements of the settlement, and selected himself to take first shot.

Stepping forward in advance of his comrades, he levelled his revolver, and aimed at Donald's legs. The shot struck the ground a few inches to the left, sending up a shower of fine snow, and ricocheted away over the plains.

Donald started and moved quickly aside, with a frightened look in his eyes. Before he had time to realise the horror of his helpless situation, a second shot struck him in the chest, and leaping into the air, he fell with a dull thud on the hard, crisp snow.

A pause. Then an irregular volley from a dozen revolvers; a little cloud of snow as the shots strike the ground about the prostrate body; a murmur of approval among the men with the smoking weapons; and little Nell is avenged!

But it really is not so very dreadful, after all, because, you see, Donald was a Scotch collie, and Nell a little Irish terrier.

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